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Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001

Kemptville Session
June 19, 2001

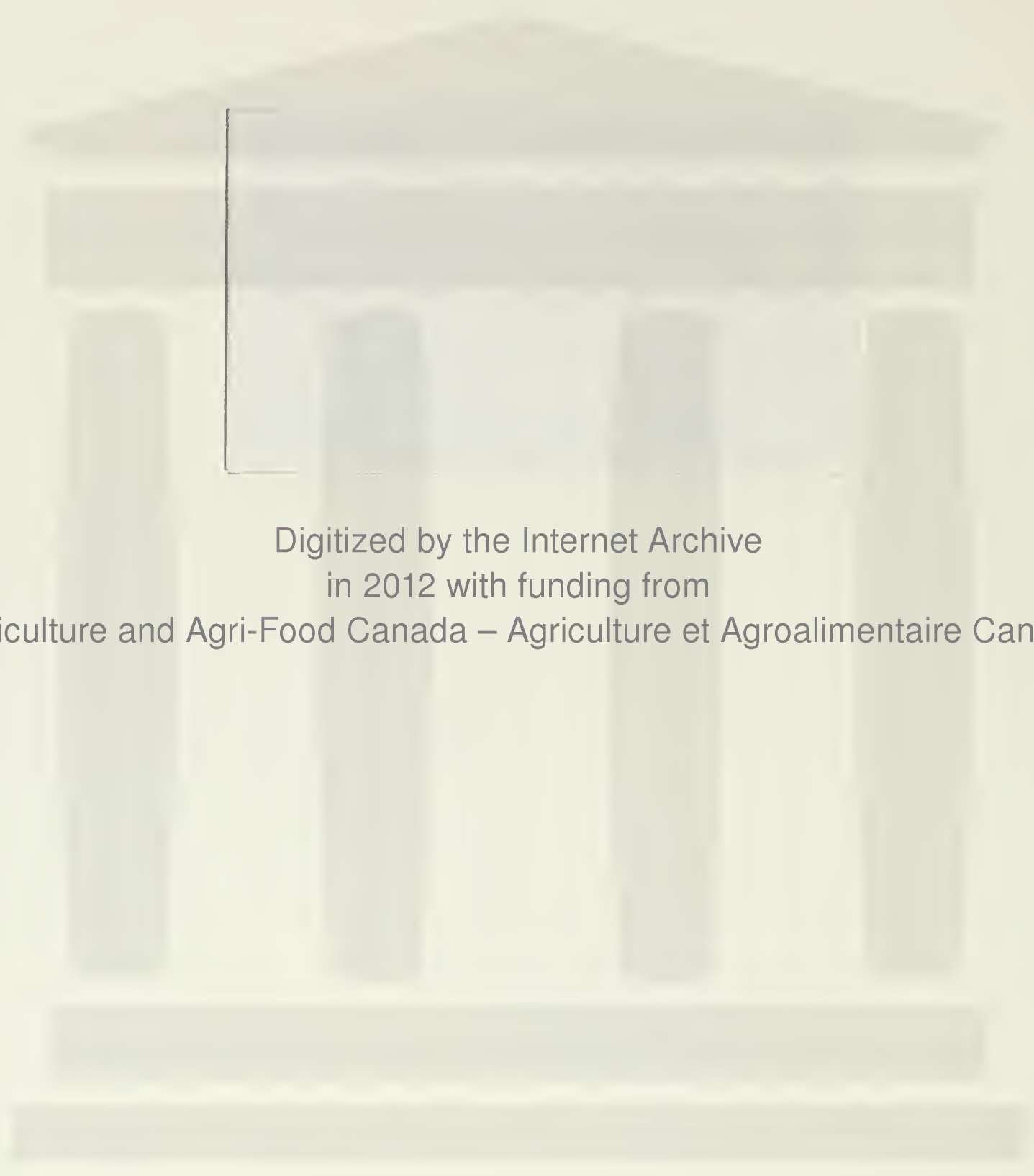
CANADIAN RURAL PARTNERSHIP

RURAL DIALOGUE



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**Ontario
Rural Dialogue 2001**

**Kemptville Session
June 19, 2001**

AAFC #2102/B
Cat. No. A22-238/2001-1
ISBN 0-662-66231-8

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to acknowledge the contributions made by the rural citizens of Kemptville and the surrounding area who participated in the Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001. Their thoughtful discussions and insights made it possible to identify the rural assets most valued in that part of Ontario and the strategies that should be adopted to sustain them. Our thanks go to the local coordinators and the local steering committee members for bring together a diverse group of participants and for planning a successful dialogue session. Thanks are also due to Kemptville College for making their facilities available to the session, the Ontario Agricultural Training Institute for the overall coordination of the dialogue session, and to PeoplEnergy and the local facilitators for the facilitation of the session. The sessions would not have been possible without the generous funding provided by Human Resources Development Canada, Health Canada, the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario (FedNor), and Public Works and Government Services Canada. We sincerely appreciate their generosity.

The Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001 is an initiative of the Rural Secretariat of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Rural Team-Ontario. The partners in the endeavour were the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, The Ontario Rural Council and the University of Guelph. A heartfelt thank you goes to our partners.

FOREWORD

A total of six Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001 sessions were held — Kemptville (eastern Ontario), Alfred (Francophone), Ridgetown (southwestern Ontario), Guelph (central Ontario), New Liskeard (northeastern Ontario), and Emo (northwestern Ontario) — during June and July 2001.

This document is a record of discussions that took place at the Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001 session in Kemptville on June 19, 2001. Many of the discussions took place in brainstorming sessions at which no limits were placed on the participants. Views expressed do not necessarily represent those of the Government of Canada. In order to present a true report of the free-ranging discussions, recommendations made by participants that fall outside federal jurisdiction are also included. Participant recommendations contained in this report are recorded as they were heard. We thank session participants for their comments.

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Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001 Kemptville Session

Executive Summary

Introduction

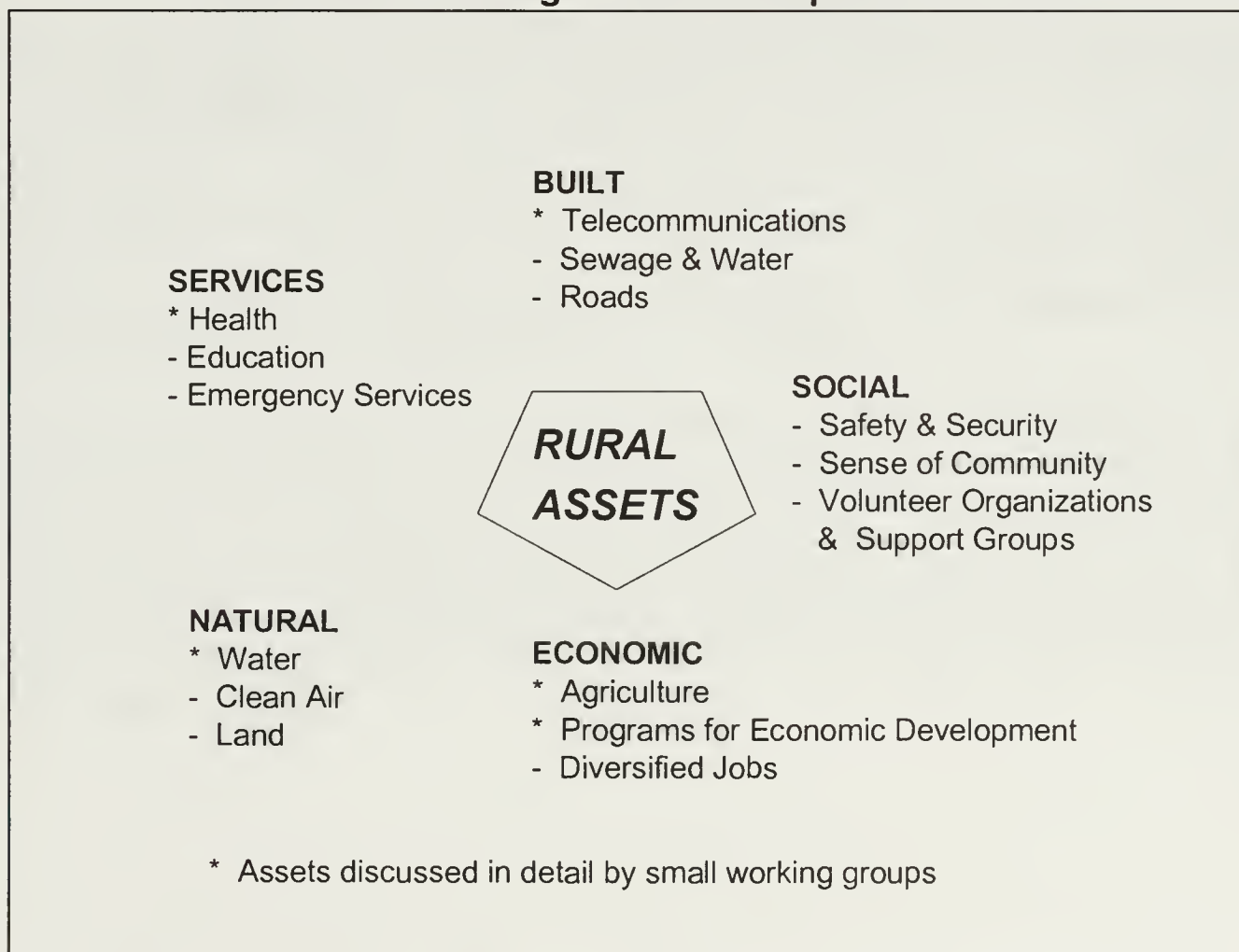
The first of the six Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001 sessions was held in eastern Ontario. Forty-five rural residents, from a variety of age groups, interests and occupational categories met in Kemptville on June 19, 2001, to discuss positive perspectives on rural values and priorities as part of the Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001 process.

The Assets Approach to Valuing Rural Ontario

An **assets-based approach** was used to enable participants to focus on the strengths and resources of rural and remote communities and to identify threats to these assets. Participants then discussed positive strategies for citizen and government action to sustain key assets.

Participants identified and defined the key rural assets within **five asset bundles — built (infrastructure), social, economic, natural, and services**. The following diagram identifies the key rural assets in each asset bundle.

Assets Wheel Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001: Kemptville Session



Through a voting and discussion process, the Kemptville session participants identified the key rural assets they value most: **health, water, agriculture, education, clean air, telecommunications, economic development, social, land, and sense of community.**

Participant Recommendations

After meeting with their focus groups, participants came together to present strategies that would utilize resources and mitigate threats, in order to sustain the identified assets. By voting, the group identified the following strategies as most significant.

Citizen Strategies

- Advocate for changes in tax system: recognize contributions of volunteers
- Ensure communities have the capacity to respond to changes and advancements in global economy by: identifying requirements, ensuring education, increasing awareness, securing financial resources, identifying local leaders (telecommunications)
- Farm community to educate the public and politicians: in cooperation with schools, business, tourism
- Get information out to rural residents – joint citizen/government action: education – accessible – information
- Expand public education, both in homes and in schools (about water)

Government Strategies

- Support agriculture and protect industry from the effects of globalization: creative, green \$, in interest of taxpayers
- Ensure all three levels of government work together: reduce red tape
- Increase long-term funding for economic development
- Ensure that government (health care) planning includes rural representation
- Increase staff and funding to maintain and protect water resources, and enforce regulations

Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001 Kemptville Session

Date: June 19, 2001

Location: Kemptville College

Introduction

The first of the six Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001 sessions was held in eastern Ontario. Forty-five rural residents from a variety of age groups, interests and occupational categories met in Kemptville on June 19, 2001, to discuss positive perspectives on rural values and priorities as part of the Rural Dialogue process. A demographic profile of participants is presented in Appendix A. After first identifying the key rural assets (strengths) of the region, participants discussed the resources that sustain the assets and the threats that may affect them. Participants then identified citizen and government strategies to sustain the assets for the future.

The Rural Dialogue Process

In 1998, the federal government launched the Canadian Rural Partnership (CRP) to support community development by adopting new approaches and practices to respond to rural and remote development issues.

The Rural Dialogue, a key citizen-engagement component of CRP, is an ongoing, two-way discussion between the federal government and Canadians from rural and remote regions. The dialogue helps the federal government understand local and regional challenges and opportunities, and it also provides rural and remote citizens with an opportunity to influence federal government decision making on policies and programs.

The Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001 process was designed to continue this dialogue. It was led by the Rural Secretariat of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Rural Team-Ontario (RT-O), representing many federal departments and provincial ministries. Other partners in the process were the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), The Ontario Rural Council (TORC) and the University of Guelph (UoG). Funding for the dialogue was provided by Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), Health Canada (HC), the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario (FedNor), and Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC).

Overview of the Assets Approach

Assets are what we want to keep, build upon and sustain for future generations.

Assessing and measuring rural assets is a **positive way** of valuing what we have and want to keep in rural Canada. Using an assets approach allows us to generate a total picture of the features and characteristics of rural life that are most valued by rural citizens. The information acquired in this data-gathering approach identifies and affirms what we **all** think is important about rural life. It becomes vital information for political and strategic representation of the “rural.” Asset building connects people to a common cause. It brings us together, focuses our attention, and points us in the same direction.

The assets approach is both positive and inclusive:

- Rural assets sustain livelihoods in both rural **and** urban areas.
- Assets include both **public and private** goods.

The traditional way of identifying important areas for action has been a needs assessment process. This approach identifies “problems” – areas that need attention because something is wrong or missing. In contrast, the assets approach emphasizes positives to identify resources on which to build.

A common concern about the assets approach is that it does not sufficiently acknowledge legitimate rural needs. This, however, is not the case. What appear as “needs” in the needs assessment approach appear as “assets that are threatened” in the assets approach, or as resources that are not being utilized. (For example, consider low levels of employment, which the assets approach considered to be an asset of a population available to work.) Thus, the assets approach identifies “needs,” but it examines them in the context of the larger resource pool. This enables participants to recognize the value of all of the assets in rural areas and identify strategies to sustain the most important assets, rather than focusing solely on the assets that appear to be most threatened at the time.

Assets are often measured by calculating the total value of goods and services produced in rural areas. Such assets are mathematical, and can be expressed as gross domestic product (GDP). The assets approach adds the view of what is important about rural Canada from the perspective of the rural population, the people who live and work amid the rural assets themselves.

In summary, rural assets are those popularly recognized attributes of rural areas that are considered essential for the maintenance of livelihoods, both rural and urban, and vital to sustainability of the economy, society and the environment in rural Canada.

Rural Assets Ranking

The process of identifying assets is new to most people. Over the past 30 years, processes for determining priorities for action have emphasized identifying needs. The needs assessment approach focuses on problems and negatives. The assets approach helps people focus on positives while including the total picture of both positives and negatives.

It takes time to adjust to this new way of thinking. To enable participants to work in this new method focusing on positives, the valuing of identified assets occurred in several stages. For details of the process, see **Appendix B**.

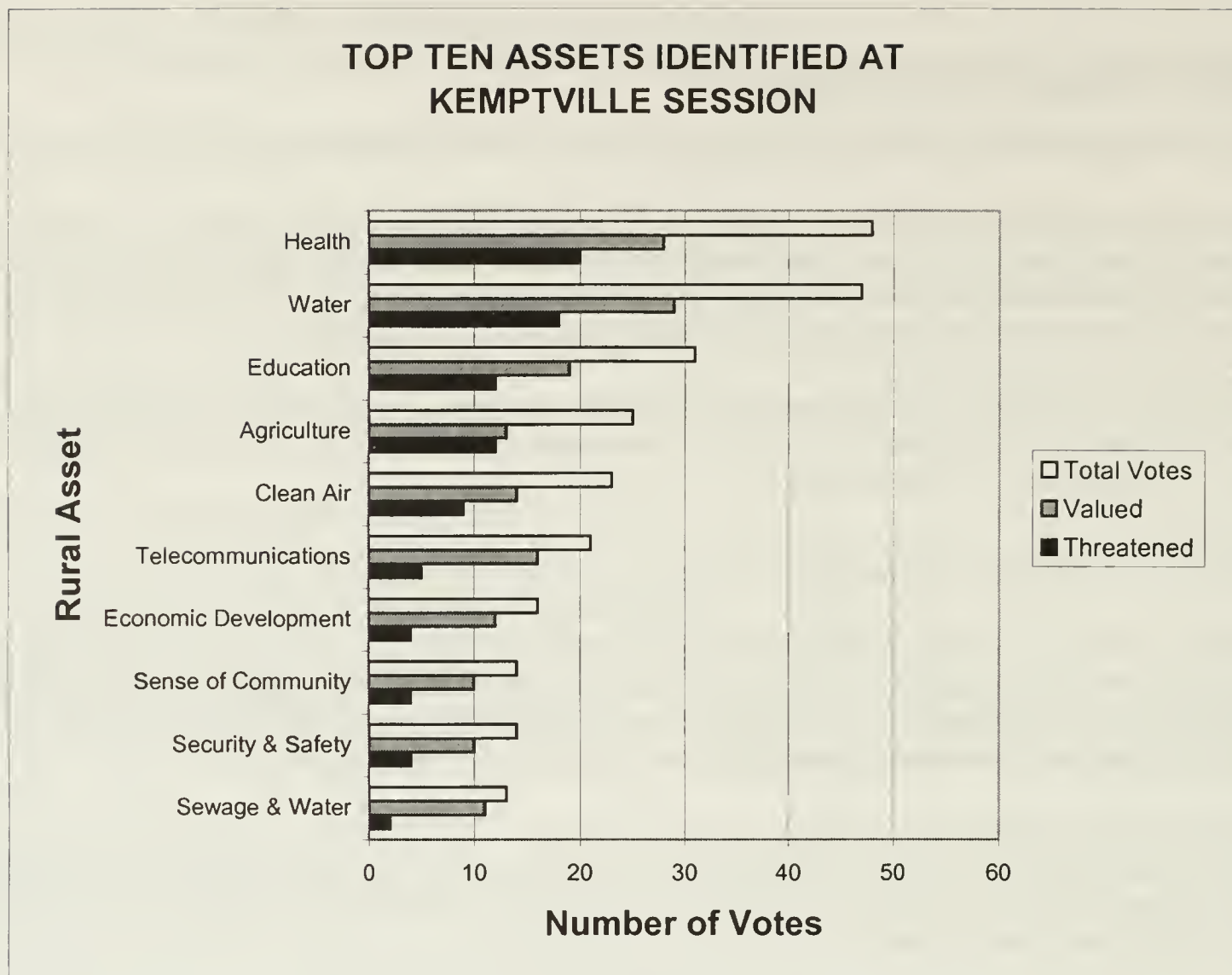
Individual Rural Asset Ranking

Over the course of the day, participants established the relative value of the assets they had identified in several ways. After the initial morning discussions, participants were asked to individually rank the assets on separate forms. **Individual asset ranking percentages are reported under each key rural asset discussed by small working groups.**

Because there is significant overlap in the definition of rural assets, they cannot be ranked precisely. For example, water and health, two commonly identified rural assets, are frequently cited in reference to same issues. Therefore, it is a matter of judgement whether the two should be considered one asset or two.

Large-group Rural Asset Ranking

Prior to the individual assets ranking, participants undertook a large-group “assets voting” process, using blue and red dots (see Appendix C for results). This enabled participants to consider the relative value of the assets they had identified and the extent to which they were valued (blue dots) or threatened (red dots). The following graph represents the top ten assets that were identified by the large-group asset voting process. It shows the total number of votes as well as the breakdown of assets considered to be valued and threatened.



Strategies for Sustaining Key Rural Assets

Citizen and government strategies developed by the Rural Dialogue participants for the key rural assets discussed in detail by small working groups are listed in the following pages. Individual and large-group asset ranking, definitions for assets, resources sustaining the assets and threats to the assets identified by participants are found in Appendix D.

Water

Citizen Strategies

Participants identified the following two strategies as most significant for local citizens:

- 1) Expand public education, both in homes and in schools
- 2) Introduce conservation programs and incentives

Other citizen strategies:

- Establish recreation awareness programs: fun and educational
- Hold water ceremonies: belief in spiritual connection with water
- Make personal financial commitment to protect resource

Government Strategies

Participants identified the following two strategies as most significant for government action:

- 1) Learn from wisdom of environmentalists and implement solutions: public education, home education
- 2) Increase staff and funding to maintain and protect water resources, and enforce regulations

Other government strategies:

- Increase level of regulations, i.e., litres/day without permit
- Increase funding for environmental issues
- Maintain export restrictions
- Create one window model for government federal/provincial/municipal – intergovernmental cooperation
- Standardize the rules and regulations for everyone
- Increase research and development for treatment and use

Health

Citizen Strategies

Participants identified the following two strategies as most significant for citizen action:

- 1) Advocate changes in tax system – recognizing contributions of volunteers
- 2) Initiate peaceful, efficient political activism on rural issues, i.e., privatization

Other citizen strategies:

- Encourage others in community, not involved in volunteer work, to get involved

Government Strategies

Participants identified the following three strategies as most significant for government action:

- 1) Ensure that government planning includes rural representation
- 2) Expand 911 and telecommunications to all areas fast!
- 3) Encourage recruitment of all health care workers to rural remote areas – incentives to stay

Other government strategies:

- Fund voluntary agencies
- Provide tax benefits to equal contribution to political groups
- Develop innovative solutions at local level outside of provincial/federal funding department silos
- Require public accountability of Ontario gaming commissions (% for local services)
- Pay community workers parity with hospital workers
- Politicians who have large rural constituents must advocate more on rural issues, i.e. “be here”

Agriculture

Citizen Strategies

Participants identified the following two strategies as most significant for local citizens:

- 1) Farm community to educate the public and politicians: in cooperation with schools, business, tourism
- 2) Get information out to rural residents – joint citizen/government action: education – accessible – information

Other citizen strategies:

- Talk to each other with view to organize/change
- Seek out opportunities to educate others about the industry
- Cooperate – teachers, ecotourism, business, libraries
- Encourage local processing – therefore local access to produce grown in area

Government Strategies

Participants identified the following two strategies as most significant for government action:

- 1) Create and support entrepreneurial programs – individual, niche markets through funding and commitment
- 2) Support agriculture and protect industry from the effects of globalization: creative, green \$, in interest of taxpayers

Other government strategies:

- Encourage peaceful efficient political activism (know-how, tools)
- Encourage agriculture as a career for youth through school system
- Promote immigration skills in food processing for rural areas – program kiosks
- Make legislation and enforcement more producer friendly
- Recognize agriculture as special interest group
- Provide teaching and funds for training for a food processing course tied to a career business idea – loan, grant, business plan and start up business after training – driven with some government assistance – this area emphasizes dairy and cash crop
- Educate politicians “Celebrate Ontario Agriculture”
- Visit farms and food fairs
- Encourage farmers to appreciate other agriculture sectors – buy local – farmers’ markets, food baskets

Telecommunications

Citizen Strategies

Participants identified the following two strategies as most significant for local citizens:

- 1) Ensure communities have the capacity to respond to changes and advancements in global economy by: identifying requirements, ensuring education, increasing awareness, securing financial resources, identifying local leaders
- 2) Increase awareness

Other citizen strategies:

- Get continuing education
- Network
- Provide promotion support, keep up to date
- Keep “towns” going – being proactive
- Form representative committees, lobby groups to work in conjunction with municipality
- Identify local champions
- Identify requirements

Government Strategies

Participants identified the following two strategies as most significant for government action:

- 1) Ensure all three levels of government work together: reduce red tape
- 2) Influence curriculum development in the area – telecommunications education, information and communications technology education

Other government strategies:

- Listen to requirements
- Give feedback
- Assist with funding education process
- Promote an awareness to upgrade
- Help agencies or organizations respond to needs of individuals or business in the community – all levels of government can assist – information technology solutions, human resources, financial
- Sell Canada as a world leader in telecommunications

Economic Development

Citizen Strategies

Participants identified the following three strategies as most significant for community action:

- 1) Develop, encourage community groups – strategic alliance (sharing resources)
- 2) Establish a strategic network of support: long-term plan, leadership, vision, common goals, influence policy
- 3) Improve process of communication, information, dissemination, awareness – just do it – action

Government Strategies

Participants identified the following two strategies as most significant for government action:

- 1) Develop long-term funding, strategy and measurables: social, economic, environmental
- 2) Establish stronger links and communication

Other government strategies:

- Listen to the people
- Just do something – action
- Provide good programs

- Disseminate/evaluate
- Provide outreach
- Address age relevancy
- Take special interest in rural inclusion
- Establish flexible funding/measurable

Recommendations

Near the end of the day, participants gathered to present the strategies recommended by the five focus groups. Participants then voted individually on what they believed to be the best citizen and government strategies overall.

Citizen Strategies

- Advocate for changes in tax system: recognize contributions of volunteers
- Ensure communities have the capacity to respond to changes and advancements in global economy by: identifying requirements, ensuring education, increasing awareness, securing financial resources, identifying local leaders (telecommunications)
- Farm community to educate the public and politicians: in cooperation with schools, business, tourism
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Government Strategies

- Support agriculture and protect industry from the effects of globalization: creative, green \$, in interest of taxpayers
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- Ensure that government (health care) planning includes rural representation
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Common Themes

The following “resources” and “threats” for asset sustainability were identified in several of the focus groups.

Resources

- Government programs and regulations
- Education – at home and at school, formal and informal
- Public/private partnerships
- Community advocates

Threats

- Lack of awareness/understanding/communication about rural characteristics and issues
- Lack of standardization in access to service
- Urban spread
- Lack of grassroots voice for rural

Others

- Many of the group reflections were interconnected. For example, access to high-speed technology was listed as important by both the telecommunications and the health asset working groups. The water and agriculture working groups shared similar concerns for the environment. The agriculture and economic development working groups also had many common resources, such as skilled workforce and education.

Next Steps

The Ontario Rural Dialogue 2001 sessions took place in six regions across Ontario. Information from all sessions will be amalgamated and analyzed to develop a comprehensive picture of the assets valued by citizens in rural Ontario. Results of this larger analysis and the information from the Ontario Regional Rural Conference 2001 held in North Bay, Ontario, August 26-28, 2001, will be incorporated into a final report.

The final report will reflect a comprehensive portrait of key rural assets in Ontario along with the strategies recommended by conference participants.

Appendix A:

Demographic Profile of Participants

The Rural Dialogue process is designed to be inclusive of the range of citizens living in rural Ontario. Enough demographic information was collected from participants to identify the diversity of participants and to verify the ideas expressed by specific groups, such as farmers and youth. The following numbers are based on the 38 completed profile forms returned by participants.

Demographic features of the Kemptville session:

- ⇒ 71% of participants (27 of 38) were female, 29% were male
- ⇒ Over 50% of participants were 50 years or older
- ⇒ 37% of participants live in rural non-farm residences, 26% of participants live on farms, and 24% live in towns under 25,000 population
- ⇒ 86% of participants have lived in their local area for at least 10 years
- ⇒ 29% of participants listed **government** as their primary or secondary occupation
- ⇒ 26% of participants listed **voluntary/non-profit** organization as their primary or secondary occupation
- ⇒ 20% of participants listed **farming** as their primary or secondary occupation
- ⇒ 19% of participants listed **education** as their primary or secondary occupation
- ⇒ 18% of participants listed **business or commerce** as their primary or secondary occupation
- ⇒ 11% of participants listed **health** as their primary or secondary occupation
- ⇒ 76% of participants reported total household incomes of over \$40,000

Overall, a diverse group of rural citizens participated in the Rural Dialogue at Kemptville.

Appendix B:

The Process of Valuing Assets in Rural Ontario

All of the information presented by participants was gathered together to form a “data set,” which includes information both from and about the participants. Information from all six of the dialogue sessions will be gathered together and analyzed to develop a comprehensive picture of the assets valued by citizens in rural Ontario.

- ⇒ **Participant Profile:** As part of the registration process, participants were asked to complete a two-page Participant Profile, which included demographic information. This information will be used to characterize the diversity of participants and to identify the ideas expressed by specific groups, such as farmers and youth.
- ⇒ **Assets Wheel:** Participants created a comprehensive list of the key rural assets under five asset bundles: built (infrastructure), social, economic, natural, and services.
- ⇒ **Assets Voting:** Participants were given seven blue dots to indicate the assets they valued most, and three red dots, to indicate the assets they believed to be most threatened at this time. Assets “Voting” Results can be found in **Appendix C**.
- ⇒ **Comprehensive Overview of Key Assets:** The three assets with the most votes in each of the asset bundles were brought to the front of the room and discussed. This enabled participants to think about what fellow rural residents valued as rural assets.
- ⇒ **Assets Ranking:** Following the group discussion, participants were given a second opportunity to rank rural assets. Participants were asked to identify the five assets they, as individuals, valued the most. These assets rankings were collected on individual sheets.
- ⇒ **Asset Working Groups:** Participants then selected working groups to discuss the characteristics and issues surrounding a particular asset. Working group discussions were organized around the following:
 - ⇒ **Asset Definition**
 - ⇒ **Resources Sustaining the Asset**
 - ⇒ **Threats to Sustaining the Asset**
 - ⇒ **Recommended Citizen Strategies for Sustaining the Asset**
 - ⇒ **Recommended Government Strategies for Sustaining the Asset**
- ⇒ **Large-group Recommendations:** At the end of the day, the focus group presented its recommendations for citizens and government. All of the participants voted on their top three citizen strategies and top three government strategies.

Appendix C: Asset “Voting” Results

During the morning session, participants were asked to identify, and then vote on the rural assets they believed to be most important to rural lives. Participants were given seven blue dots to indicate the assets they valued most, and an additional three red dots to indicate the assets they believed to be most threatened. The totals for all of the assets identified are listed below. The blue dot totals are listed first, separated by a comma from the red dot totals.

Built

Telecommunications – 16,5

Landfill Water Management – 7,1
 Recreation/Health/Municipal Buildings – 0,0
 Sewage and Water – 11,2
 Roads – 11,1
 Municipal Drainage – 3,2
 Energy Infrastructure – 4,0

Social

Sense of Community – 10,4

Security and Safety – 15, 4
 Roots/Stability – 3,3
 Volunteer Organizations/
 Support Groups – 11,1
 Networks – 3,0
 Good for Kids – 4,0
 Faith Group – 1,1
 Family – 5,1
 Peaceful – 2,0
 Independence – 2, 0

Natural

Water – 29,18

Clean Air – 14,9
 Silence – 2,0
 Land – 15,2
 Landscape pastoral vistas – 0,1
 Open Space – 1,0
 Mineral Wealth – 0,0
 Wildlife – 1,3
 Trees – 0,0

Economic

Agriculture – 13,12

Prime Land/Resources – 6, 0
 Opportunities for self employment – 2,0
 Work Ethic – 1,1
 Skilled Workforce – 6,2
 Job Training Opportunities – 4,0
 Public and Private Partnerships – 0,0
 Programs for Economic Development – 12,4
 Diversified Jobs – 10,0

Services

Health – 28, 20

Education – 19, 12

Information Services – 3,1
 Fire – 2,0
 Emergency – 7,3
 Municipal – 3,3
 Policing – 1,0
 Correctional – 0,0
 Transportation – 1,0
 Childcare – 0,1
 Social Services – 0,0
 Hydro Energy – 3,0
 Recreation – 0,1
 Training – 0,0

Appendix D:

Key Rural Assets Discussed in Small Working Groups: Definitions/Resources/Threats

Through a voting process, participants were asked to identify five key rural assets that they, as individuals, valued most from the list of key rural assets identified by the large-group asset voting process.

Telecommunications

Individual Rural Asset Ranking

Telecommunications appeared in the top five assets ranking for 16% of participants.

Large-group Asset Valuing

In the initial large-group session, **Telecommunications** was identified as the most significant asset in the “built” asset bundle.

Participants gave “telecommunications” 21 votes:

- 16 blue (valued)
- 5 red (threatened).

Definition of “Telecommunications”

Participants identified the following meanings associated with telecommunications.”

- Accessibility
- Affordability
- Availability to individuals as well as businesses
- Availability of high speed Internet

Resources Sustaining “Telecommunications”

- Community networks – lobbyists
- Government – regulation, funding
- Business – to define requirements/applications
- In-kind function – expertise, linkages to urban knowledge
- Municipalities – infrastructure, funding
- Community stakeholder involvement – champions, Community Access Program sites, Community Futures Development Corporations
- Access to technology to meet the needs of telecommunications

Threats to “Telecommunications”

- Lack of education, lack of awareness of potential for telecommunications
- Waiting for government to get infrastructure in place (lack of direction to get things going)

- Having inconsistent access (lack of standardization – also lack of computer technology in home due to financial need)
- Being on fringe of technology change
- Decreased funding for infrastructure

Water

Individual Rural Asset Ranking

Water appeared in the top five individual rural assets ranking for 61% of the participants.

Large-group Asset Valuing

In the initial large-group session, **Water** was identified as the most significant asset in the “natural” asset bundle.

Participants gave “water” a total of 47 votes:

- 29 blue (valued)
- 18 red (threatened).

Definition of “Water”

Participants identified the following meanings associated with “water.”

- Necessity of life
- Part of a constant cycle
- Not always visible
- Water system
- Spiritual connection – way of life
- From before birth
- Pray and give thanks
- Sacred: never do anything that could hurt the water

Resources Sustaining “Water”

- Individual respect for water
- Education, both in schools and at home
- Research/studies – understanding more about the workings of watersheds
- Individual responsibility for care and protection of water
- Organizations, i.e., Ducks Unlimited
- Government regulations – used to sustain the resource
- Restrictions on exports of water
- Nutrient management plan, environmental farm plan
- Provincial policy and statements
- Drainage Act
- Conservation – by law (sprinkling) – building codes (septic, fixture) – water meter

Threats to “Water”

- Pollution
- Regulations – not uniform
- Exporting to the United States of America – supply may not be infinite
- Access to water – water table may drop
- Lakes – boat traffic – cottages – vehicle traffic
- Urban growth, rural growth – increased demands on water supply
- Possible negatives – flooding – natural disasters – beavers

Health

Individual Rural Asset Ranking

Health appeared in the top five individual rural assets ranking for 55% of the participants.

Large-group Asset Valuing

In the initial large-group session, **Health** was identified as the most significant asset in the “services” asset bundle.

Participants gave “health” 48 votes:

- 28 blue (valued)
- 20 red (threatened).

Definition of “Health”

Participants identified the following meanings associated with “health.”

- Accessibility
- Services close to home (specialist coming out)
- 911 where available
- Implementation firefighters (volunteer first response team)
- Quality health care professionals (autonomous and generalist)
- Closer knit – health care providers that network
- Linkages to larger health centres via tele-health and networks (infancy stage)
- Inoculation cost effective, resourceful
- Small hospitals, community health centres, health units, access centres (knowledge of population values, etc.)
- Volunteers and volunteer agencies, service clubs
- Funding, federal/provincial/municipal

Threats to “Health”

- Shortage of health professionals
- Cutbacks – funding
- Transportation
- Geographic isolation
- Increased costs of delivering services
- Lack of support programs

- Urban health models that don't fit rural reality
- Inability to access government funding – due to matching corporate sponsorship/donation requirement
- Demographic indicators based on urban models impact negatively on individual rural needs, i.e., social housing, culture groups, employment
- Lack of access to high speed technologies
- Lack of access to training and education funding
- Government rules and regulations
- Privatization

Agriculture

Individual Rural Asset Ranking

Agriculture appeared in the top five individual rural assets ranking for 40% of participants.

Large-group Asset Valuing

In the initial large-group session, **Agriculture** was identified as the most significant asset in the “economic” asset bundle.

Participants gave “agriculture” a total of 25 votes:

- 13 blue (valued)
- 12 red (threatened).

Definition of “Agriculture”

Participants identified the following meanings associated with “agriculture.”

- Renewable resource
- Food – necessity of life
- Backbone of society and culture
- Group of activities result in agricultural production and plant and animal fibre
- Largest economic sector, with other industry spin-offs
- Diverse job requirements (multidiscipline)
- Investment by individuals
- Adaptable and changing, adaptable to new demands
- Highly dependent on weather, the environment, and land
- Inadequately understood and promoted – doesn't enjoy a high profile
- Low image – only news when there is a crisis
- Over-regulated, farmers most self-regulated group
- Lifestyle choice – not always dependent on income earned

Resources Sustaining “Agriculture”

- Environment – water, land, energy, air
- Government extension and support
- Farmers' innovation and skills
- Marketing
- Labour, voluntary commodity groups, support groups

- Infrastructure
- Human resource – determination
- Financial institutions
- Support programs – Net Income Stabilization Account (NISA), Matching Investment Initiative (MII)
- Training institutions
- Other industries – fertilizer – petro – machinery – processing
- Communication vehicles
- Building regulations
- Law
- High quality and public confidence in our product
- Cooperation among producers' organization and marketing opportunities [statement unclear]

Threats to “Agriculture”

- Burnout – emotional, financial, physical
- Aging farmers
- Lack of successors
- Lack of skilled labour
- Financial viability
- Special interest – People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)
- Legislation – enforcers
- Lack of communications on programs/information to farmers
- Environmental dumping grounds, i.e., city – rural landfill
- Taxation and assessment
- Urban encroachment
- Weather
- Foreign animal diseases
- Loss of good agricultural land to development
- Lack of level playing field on environmental legislation and labour laws – translates into corporate globalization of agriculture
- Perception of threat to environment – no people to combat issue
- Inability of rural people to be lobbyists or act in a public relations capacity
- Increase in efficiencies

Economic Development

Individual Rural Asset Ranking

Economic Development appeared in the top five assets ranking for 16% of participants.

Large-group Asset Valuing

In the initial large-group session, **Economic Development** was identified as the second most significant asset in the “economic” asset bundle.

Participants gave “economic development” 16 votes:

- 12 blue (valued)
- 4 red (threatened).

Definition of “Economic Development”

Participants identified the following meanings associated with “economic development.”

- Value economic activity
- Leads to employment
- Relationship public/private
- Community Economic Development – rural – balance social, economic, environment
- Youth remaining in communities
- Strategic alliances
- Rural sustainability – growth strategy
- Business support

Resources Sustaining “Economic Development”

- Private sector partners
- Government funding
- Organizations, Community Futures Development Corporation
- Leaders, expertise, vision
- Education, universities, colleges, research skills development
- Best practices – models, networking
- Trained and skilled workforces

Threats to “Economic Development”

- Inability to accept change
- Community competition for government dollars
- Funding not at grassroots, access to capital
- Increased understanding of rural issues
- Public/private – return on investment
- Duplication
- Lack of critical mass
- Stakeholders – leadership
- Revolution by government – globalize
- Restructuring – downsizing
- Lack of resources
- Gas prices
- Market – innovative thinking

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